

HAMNET BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY 6 OCTOBER 2002

HAMNET is the Official Emergency Communications Unit of the South African Radio League and is responsible for providing emergency communication in times of distress or national disasters to local and regional authorities, when requested to do so.

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REPORT BACK ON SAR CONFERENCE

This was a very interesting and informative Conference, and by all accounts, one that will be taking place once a year.

The reason for this Consultative conference was to establish the feasibility of creating a Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre.

This will be an independent authority, (reporting to the Dept. of Transport), which will be responsible for all rescue attempts anywhere in South Africa. Whether it will at a later stage incorporate the current SASAR organisation, remains to be seen as a draft constitution of the South African Search & Rescue Organisation was also submitted at the convention.

There were about 14 guest speakers covering all aspects of all Government Departments who could be or have been in need of Search & Rescue or are currently heading Search & Rescue Organisations.

What was also interesting was that 3 members of the public were invited to air their views and also present papers simply because they had lost loved ones in tragedies in and around South Africa.

Of the 3, Wayne Mcfarlane presented a most interesting paper. He is the son of a helicopter pilot who's helicopter went down somewhere between Port Elizabeth and the Wilderness in 1999. The helicopter or wreckage has never been found - even after an extensive search that lasted for months.

Wayne, who is a helicopter pilot himself, presented a paper that was thoroughly investigated, well presented and kept us nailed to our seats for about 25 minutes.

We do not have the time to quote all the items he mentioned that should be followed by all aircraft in South Africa, but for those who wish a copy of my report to council, please let me know and I will gladly send or e-mail you a copy.

The conference ended on Saturday morning with various resolutions being taken and we will now wait and see what transpires.

I also take note of the fact that we should soon have a national SASAR annual general meeting which last year took place in Pretoria in early December.

3rd PARTY TRAFFIC ON AMATEUR BANDS

This contentious item was highlighted on the SARL main news bulletin last Sunday and has provoked a lot of comment and discussion.

If you are a member of HAMNET, passing 3rd party traffic, whether it be an organised event or any other incident, there is no problem as an arrangement exists between HAMNET, the SARL and ICASA.

May I again remind all HAMNET and other Amateur Radio Operators, that after the 9/11 incident, all volunteers who were members of ARES, RACES and the Red Cross, and who were members of the ARRL, received preferential approval to engage in handling all emergencies arising from this specific incident.

The same applies in South Africa when it comes to SARL membership.

Let me explain one thing regarding the handling of “traffic”. Any licensed Amateur Radio Operator who comes across a situation, which needs to be notified over our frequencies, is quite within his or her rights to render assistance to the community at that specific incident. That’s what amateur radio is all about.

However, when our amateur radios and our frequencies are used for rallies, sporting events and any organised event, which falls outside the spectrum of “a genuine emergency”, and the operator is not a member of the SARL or HAMNET, ICASA, the regulatory authority, will not be happy.

We have often asked in the past, when such an event takes place, the onus rests on the Club to advise the SARL of the operators who will be using their equipment for this specific event. This hardly ever happens.

We will again approach ICASA regarding Amateurs using their equipment for non-emergency events and passing 3rd party traffic. But until such time as a specific written ruling is made, please be aware that the old rule applies. You may be using your equipment illegally.

What upsets me personally is the attitude of some amateurs who are trying to imply that being a member of the SARL is like suffering from some contagious disease.

Please remember, the middleman between us mortal amateurs and the regulatory authority is our League. The League represent all paid up amateurs in South Africa. The League is there to ensure that our hobby can continue to be enjoyed by all those who appreciate the fact that radio frequencies are a scarce resource and that more and more pressure is being made to encroach on or remove frequencies which are always just taken for granted. The fewer the SARL headcount, the easier it’s going to be for the Regulatory Authority to reduce or remove our frequencies.

NEW BILLS PASSED THROUGH PARLIAMENT

Two new bills were passed through Parliament last month, which will have a direct bearing on HAMNET and emergency communication and emergencies in general.

The one is the Disaster Management Bill, which I have not been able to download as yet from the Government Internet site, but the South African Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue Bill, has been downloaded and will be studied in due course.

The implications and what these Bills have in store for us, will be discussed at a later stage once the Bills have been studied and disseminated, but it augurs good for the country in general. The Somerset West MRCC conference emphasises the fact that the Government is serious about disasters, search & rescue.

HAMNET BULLETINS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Sunday morning kicks off with Hamnet KZN at 07H15 on their local VHF repeaters with a relay on 7.070MHz by Wally ZS5WP.

Followed with the national Bulletin on 10,130Mhz in the 30M band with a relay on 7.070Mhz by Martin ZS6MSG. In Gauteng, 145,700Mhz is also used for a local transmission. The time is 17h00 local during summer months and 16H30 during winter months.

Next we have Gauteng North. Their bulletin is read on Tuesdays at 20:30 local time to accommodate those who are in church on a Sunday evening.

The frequencies are 145,725MHz and either on 7,070MHz in the 40M band or 3,695MHz in the 80M band.

North West Province have a club bulletin on Mondays, which includes a Hamnet segment at 19H00 local on 3,750Mhz in the 80M band as well as their local repeater on 145.737.5Mhz.

Last but not least is Hamnet Western Cape Province with a bulletin on Wednesdays at 20H30 local on 145:700MHz, Read by Andrew Perrins, ZR1SBM and relayed by Matt ZS1MJJ on 3,674MHz.

Whatever you missed please access the S.A.R.L. Website under the heading "Hamnet News - regularly updated", for the latest news or if you are on Packet, it will have been sent to you thanks to Rudi ZS6DX.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Nothing of note was received this month. May I again please request that Provincial Directors seriously consider appointing a person on his or her committee to be responsible for news items from each Province or region.

From a personal point of view, it was most enjoyable to spend some time with members of the Boland Branch after their annual meeting and braai in Stellenbosch on Saturday the 21st of September. HAMNET and its activities was discussed and also present was Rassie and Carl who represent the League from the Western Cape.

FINAL NOTE.

Hurricane Lilly, bearing down on the U.S.A. gulf area, and thought to be one of the most vicious since 1948, fortunately petered out as a major tropical storm by the time it hit the coast. This was blessing as at one time, wind speeds exceeded 220 kilometres per hour and the comments that went around was, “this is a disaster just waiting to happen”.

What was also interesting was that the ARRL allocated 2 specific frequencies, one in the 80 metre band and one in the 40 metre band as dedicated emergency frequencies and requested that these frequencies be kept clear by 3 kc's on either side. In general, the request was adhered to but there were still those who chose to ignore this request.

Bulletin ends.